UNITED
NATIONS

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Secretariat

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INFORMATION CIRCULAR

To: Members of the staff

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for Conference and Support Services

Subject: INTERNET PROJECT

1. The Electronic Services Division is currently undertaking two major projects relating to access to and use of the INTERNET, a rapidly growing publicly accessed network of networks. The aim of the project is to bring to a user's desktop computer (PC) the vast and varied information disseminated through the INTERNET networks, thus providing the user with a valuable tool for research and information retrieval.

2. The first of these projects, already under way, is the installation at Headquarters of two INTERNET services. One, known as a "Gopher service", will be used to post, in simple text format, information that various departments/ offices of the United Nations wish to make available to the general public. As a complement to the Gopher, a second service, known as the World Wide Web (WWW), will be capable of delivering graphics and other non-text objects, such as sound and video.

3. The second project scheduled to be implemented in 1995 is the provision of access to various INTERNET services to staff members at United Nations Headquarters.

4. The Electronic Services Division is taking a gradual approach in implementing these services to ensure that the United Nations network has the capability of sustaining significant increases in data traffic as more users begin transferring data from computers on the INTERNET. It is also important to ensure that users have been properly trained, since each service differs in how the user searches for data and how the information is presented, and that the help desk is adequately staffed, trained and equipped to provide adequate support to staff members starting to use INTERNET services.

5. A pilot project, wherein five users in each department will be provided with INTERNET access, is planned. Each PC connected to the INTERNET will be

specially configured and loaded with a set of special programs. During the pilot period, the Electronic Services Division will monitor the performance of the network and review the usage patterns over a period of time. As the number of connections is increased, real data on usage will be gathered and the impact on the network resources will be assessed.

6. At the end of the pilot project, it is expected that the support, maintenance and enhancements of INTERNET-related services will be funded by the user departments. A flat charge of $150 per connection per year will be assessed for INTERNET access. This charge compares favourably with commercial services that provide connections to INTERNET.

7. Requests for connections, including those for the pilot project, should be submitted in writing through the Executive Office to the Electronic Services Division and should indicate the specific reasons for the request, i.e. the need for INTERNET services in relation to the requester's duties and responsibilities. Intradepartmental priorities are the responsibility of the submitting department/office.

8. Although these requirements may seem stringent and the availability of the services very limited, once a clear assessment of the resources required has been made and the capability of the infrastructure to support these services properly is assured, the numbers can be increased rapidly to accommodate the requirements of most departments/offices.